

Preserving Working Farm and Forest Land in Virginia

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- What are the challenges facing working lands?
- Why save farm and forest land?
- What are local governments doing to address these challenges?
- What is the state doing to address these challenges?
- What next?

Farming and Forestry Faces Many Challenges

- Farmers are getting increasingly older
- 70 percent of farmland/farm businesses expected to transfer over next 15 years
- Between 1992 and 1997, 23,260 acres of farmland and over 22,000 acres of forest land lost to developed uses each year
- Public that is increasingly divorced from agriculture

Saving Farm and Forest Land is Important!

- Farming and forestry combined are Virginia's #1 industry400 years and counting!
- Well-managed farm and forest land also produces significant environmental benefits
- Farm and forest land requires little or no public services
- Farm and forest land contributes to local tourism, recreation and overall sense of place

Local Governments are Addressing These Challenges

- Local comprehensive plans
- Agricultural zoning
- Land use assessment
- Agricultural and forestal districts
- Sliding scale property tax rate
- Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) programs

The Commonwealth is Addressing These Challenges

- General Assemblies of 2000 and 2001 established the Virginia Agriculture Vitality Program
 - ? Assigned VDACS administration of Virginia Farm Link program
 - ? Established the Office of Farmland Preservation in VDACS
- Office of Farmland Preservation is responsible for the following:
 - ? Developing model policies, certification criteria, and methods and sources of funding for local PDR programs
 - ? Creating public education programs about farmland preservation
 - ? Providing technical assistance on farmland preservation
 - ? Administering Virginia Farm Link program

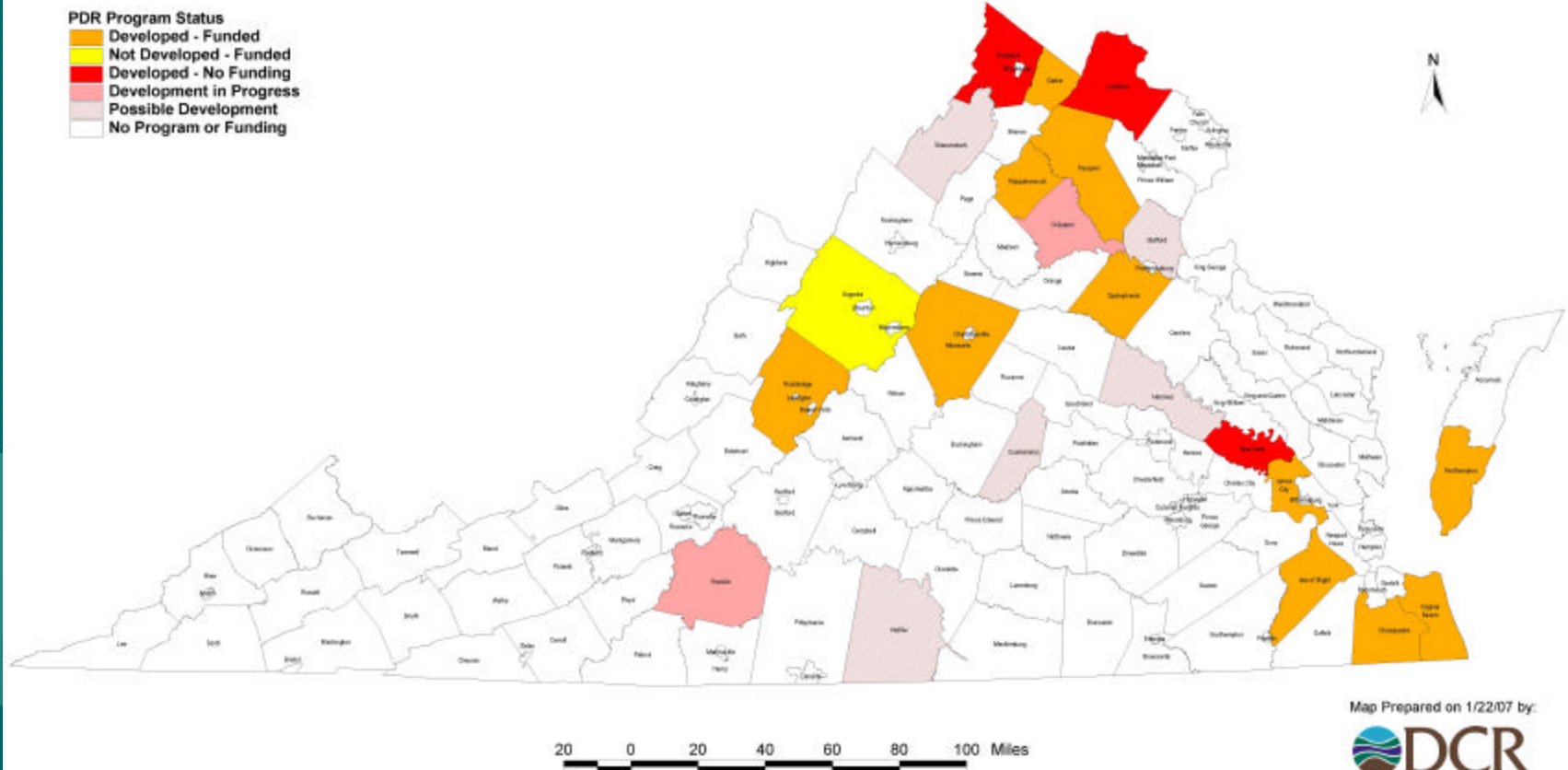
Developing a Model PDR Program for Virginia

- VDACS Farmland Preservation Task Force established
 - Diverse group of members
 - Task Force agreed to several fundamental positions at outset
- “Part 1: Suggested Components of Local PDR Programs”
 - Completed June 2004
- “Part 2: A Proposed State-Level Program to Complement Local PDR Programs”
 - Completed November 2005

Understanding PDR Programs

- PDR programs compensate landowners for permanently protecting property from development
- Conservation easement is recorded with the deed and runs with the land
- Landowner retains all other ownership rights
- Allow for continued agricultural use of the property
- These are voluntary programs!

STATUS OF LOCAL PURCHASE OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS (PDR) PROGRAMS



Suggested Components of Local PDR Programs

- Clearly defined program goals and purposes
- Action plan for education/outreach
- Adopted PDR ordinance/resolution
- Easement valuation process established

Suggested Components of Local PDR Programs (cont.)

- Broader agricultural enhancement strategy established
- Deed of easement that reflects program intent
- Monitoring program established
- Program evaluation mechanism established

Proposed State-Level Program to Complement Local PDR Programs

- State program should support local programs
 - Accept and review applications for matching funds
 - Certify local programs as being operational
 - Disperse state funds to local PDR programs
- By 2007, Commonwealth should have the capacity to provide technical assistance to all requesting localities
 - Fund Office of Farmland Preservation at \$500,000 annually
- By 2007, Commonwealth should make available \$1 million annually in matching funds to each certified local PDR program

Proposed State-Level Program to Complement Local PDR Programs (cont.)

- By 2010, 30 additional localities will establish certified PDR programs
 - Obtain \$1 million for OFP to distribute to local governments to assist in developing new PDR programs
- By 2020, at least 70 total localities will have adopted and funded certified PDR programs

2006 Legislative Session Actions

- General Assembly appropriated funding for the Office of Farmland Preservation (VDACS)
 - \$305,000 for FY 06-08
 - Coordinator was hired as of January 2007
- General Assembly established a joint subcommittee to study long-term funding for PDR programs
 - 3 meetings held in 2006
 - Legislation introduced in 2007 session to extend

Next Steps?

- Governor Kaine has proposed \$20 million in 2007 budget amendment for land conservation
 - \$5 million to Office of Farmland Preservation for matching grants to local PDR programs
 - \$13.7 to the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation (VLCF)
- VDACS will be establishing an Office of Farmland Preservation Web site and technical assistance materials

Next Steps? (cont.)

- VDACS will be convening State Farmland Preservation Task Force in March to establish specifics of the state matching program
- The Office of Farmland Preservation will work with Farm Bureau to establish Virginia Farm Link program at VDACS

For Additional Information

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